

Philippine News

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Arroyo to work for Filvets benefits

PRESIDENT Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said that she will continue to work for increased benefits for Filipino World War II veterans from the American government.

In her speech at a gala dinner at the Marriott Hotel organized by the Filipino community here, the President said that during her meeting with US President George W. Bush in Los Cabos, Mexico, she again reminded him of his promises to help the Filipino veterans.

"When I was with President Bush at the APEC summit, I reminded him again about our Filipino veterans," the President said.

The two leaders were among the heads of state and governments of the 21 member-economies of the Pacific Rim who attended the 10th Economic Leaders Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

The President said that she had

included the veterans benefits in the agenda of all her bilateral meetings with President Bush, especially during her official visit to Washington, D.C. last year.

She also called on the Filipino community here to support American legislators who have endorsed the bill that would expand benefits for Filipino World War II veterans.

The President lauded in particular San Diego Rep. Bob Filner, the principal author of a bill that has been passed in the US House of Representatives for health care compensation and burial benefits for Filipino veterans to the tune of \$65 million.

"And I know that you, the Filipino community, will always support those who support the Philippine cause," the President said. The President then called on the Filipino-Americans here to pray so that the appropriations bill would

pass the US Senate.

According to the President, her advocacy on behalf of the Filipino war veterans has paid off since the US Veterans Administration is providing \$500,000 per year for veterans healthcare in the Philippines.

The President said that this would be the first time in so many years and after so many attempts in the past that the American government is giving this amount to Filipino war veterans, adding that the first \$500,000 would be released to the Philippine government within this month.

Meanwhile, Filipino-Americans in San Diego and in the outlying cities of Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Phoenix came in full force and in their formal best to the gala dinner in honor of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo at the ballroom of the Marriott Hotel. -- MNS